

TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD



September 1, 2020

Response to formal request for information

House Committee on Higher Education

Interim Charge 4: Online Education

Texas institutions of higher education have confronted unforeseen challenges due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – none more dramatic than the transition of thousands of classroom-based courses to online delivery in a very short period. The experience has demonstrated the need for strategic investments to bolster quality and reduce costs in digital learning resources. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is engaged in multiple initiatives designed to strengthen online education and accelerate the use of high-quality online educational resources (OER) to enable educators to access open online content and provide students significant savings. One of the most important paths forward will be working with colleges and universities across the state to bolster the state’s online learning and OER infrastructure. Even as the immediate impact of coronavirus recedes, the demand for high-quality digital educational resources is expected to grow.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES REPOSITORY (HB 3652, 86TH LEGISLATURE)

HB 3652 (86R) required the Coordinating Board to contract with a high-quality open educational resource (OER) repository to develop and maintain a web portal customized to meet the needs of individual institutions of higher education, students, and others who may benefit from access to open educational resources. The Coordinating Board has partnered with the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME), creators of [OER Commons](#), to create an OER repository for Texas – [OERTX](#). OERTX is designed to facilitate the curation of OER e-textbooks and other OER materials used frequently by Texas institutions of higher education and to support the creation and customization of resources to meet the needs of Texas students and faculty. All OERTX resources will be shareable, customizable, and scalable digital resources free and available to any user. The Coordinating Board is partnering with Texas institutions of higher education to include faculty-created, proven instructional resources that align with Texas Core Curriculum courses, co-requisite courses, and career and technical programs. The web portal will also offer online teaching support and training for faculty. Materials developed by Coordinating Board faculty grantees from the 2018 and 2020 OER Grant Program, authorized by the 85th Texas Legislature, will be available in OERTX.

GOVERNOR’S EMERGENCY EDUCATION RELIEF FUNDING

Governor Abbott recently announced \$10 million through federal Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding to improve the quality of online learning by strengthening distance education course offerings and bolstering institutions’ capabilities to use data to support student success. This will include funds to develop OER course materials that significantly reduce costs to students. GEER funding for OER will focus on Texas Core Curriculum courses, co-requisite courses, and career and technical support that promotes reskilling and upskilling of the Texas workforce. Funding will also support implementing and enhancing institutional learning analytics and the development of a digital learning clearinghouse. Coordinating Board staff are currently in the initial phases of working through implementation details for this and other components of GEER funding initiatives. This investment in online learning support will help Texas accelerate the pace of innovation, support student progress toward high-value credentials, and dramatically reduce the costs of higher education to Texas students and families.